

## Message Text

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44

ACTION ARA-10

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P R 161452Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4848

INFO AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 1725

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, AR

SUBJECT: POSITION OF UCR IN FACE OF NATIONAL CRISIS

1. LA OPINION COLUMNIST INDICATED OVER THE WEEKEND THAT THE CONGRESS IS NOW DIVIDED NOT ALONG PARTY LINES BUT INTO TWO GROUPS. THE FIRST GROUP, PROBABLY THE MAJORITY, CONSISTS OF THOSE WHO ARE COMPLETELY RESIGNED TO THE INEVITABILITY OF A COUP AND HAVE THEREFORE GIVEN UP ANY FURTHER EFFORT ON THEIR OWN PART. THE SECOND GROUP, HE SAID, CONSISTS OF THOSE WHO, WHILE UNDERSTANDING THAT THEIR EFFORTS ARE PROBABLY FUTILE, ARE NONETHELESS CONTINUING TO WORK FOR A CONSTITUTIONAL SOLUTION RIGHT UP UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE. CERTAINLY THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT MOST CONGRESSMEN NOW BELONG IN THE FIRST GROUP. SEVERAL DEPUTIES HAVE CALLED EMBOFFS TO SAY GOODBYE FROM THE CONGRESS AND A NUMBER OF CONGRESSMEN ARE KNOWN TO HAVE ALREADY CLEARED OUT THEIR OFFICES AND GONE HOME. IF IT CAN BE SAID THAT THE CONGRESS IS DIVIDED INTO TWO SUCH GROUPS, THE SAME CAN ALSO BE SAID OF BODY POLITICS AS A WHOLE. AFTER EFFORTS AT IMPEACHMENT IN THE CONGRESS AND THEN THE EFFORTS TO HOLD A LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY BOTH FAILED, MANY CIVILIAN POLITICIANS RECOGNIZED THE INEVITABLE AND GAVE UP. NOT SO, HOWEVER, THE UCR'S RICARDO BALBIN. HE AND HIS TOP LIEUTENANTS ARE CONTINUING TO WORK FOR A CONSTITUTIONAL SOLUTION EVEN THOUGH THEY KNOW THAT ONE IS NO LONGER POSSIBLE. BALBIN LAST  
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WEEK CALLED FOR A MULTI-PARTY MEETING TO TRY TO IMPOSE GUIDE-

LINES ON THE GOVERNMENT WHICH HE HOPED MIGHT PROVIDE SOME SOLUTION. ANTONIO TROCCOLI, HEAD OF THE UCR BLOC AND CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES, AT THE SAME TIME CALLED FOR A MULTI-PARTY CAUCUS IN THE CONGRESS WITH THE SAME AIM. NEITHER EFFORT HAS COME TO ANYTHING.

2. UNDAUNTED, BALBIN HAS TALKED TO THE NEW FIRST VICE PRESIDENT OF THE PERONIST PARTY, GOVERNOR BITTEL, IN AN EFFORT TO PERSUADE THE GOVERNMENT TO CHANGE COURSE. HE DOUBTLESS WILL HAVE NO LUCK AT THAT, BUT HE AND HIS TOP LIEUTENANT, ENRIQUE VANOLI, HAVE SUCCEEDED IN CONVINCING BITTEL AND INTERIOR MINISTER ARES TO PERMIT HIM TO GO ON TELEVISION TONIGHT TO ADDRESS THE NATION. ACCORDING TO VANOLI, BALBIN WILL EMPHASIZE THAT THE UCR CONTINUES TO BELIEVE IN CONSTITUTIONAL SOLUTIONS AND DOES NOT ENDORSE A COUP. HE WILL AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, SHARPLY CRITICIZE THE GOVERNMENT AND WILL SUGGEST THAT RESPONSIBILITY FOR BRINGING THE COUNTRY TO ITS PRESENT SAD STATE (AND BY INFERENCE TO THE BRINK OF A COUP) LIES WITH THE PERONIST LEADERSHIP. HE WILL STRESS THAT NATIONAL UNITY HAS BEEN AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE THE UCR'S PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVE.

3. VANOLI TOLD EMBOFF YESTERDAY (MARCH 15) THAT BALBIN UNDERSTANDS PERFECTLY WELL THAT SPEECH WILL NOT HEAD OFF MILITARY INTERVENTION. ITS PURPOSE, RATHER, IS (A) TO PUT THE UCR ON RECORD AS HAVING WORKED FOR CONSTITUTIONAL SOLUTION RIGHT UP UNTIL THE MOMENT THE TANKS ROLLED AND (B) TO PROVIDE A FRAMEWORK (NATIONAL UNITY) WITHIN WHICH THE UCR CAN COOPERATE WITH THE OTHER PARTIES AND WITH THE MILITARY IN THE FUTURE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT.

4. VARIOUS UCR SOURCES HAVE COMMENTED TO EMBOFFS THAT IT IS VERY LIKELY THAT PRESENT LEADERSHIP OF THE UCR INCLUDING BALBIN WILL BE SWEEPED AWAY IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE MILITARY INTERVENTION WHICH THEY BELIEVE IS SOON TO COME.  
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